

THE
CONSTITUTION
OF
WESLEYAN METHODISM,
AS SETTLED IN 1795 AND 1797.

ALSO, THE RULES OF THE SOCIETY.

Second Edition, Enlarged—Price Three-halfpence.

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF CONFERENCE OF 1795;
COMPRISING WHAT IS COMMONLY CALLED "THE PLAN OF PACIFICATION."

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST SOCIETY.

Dearly Beloved Brethren,—We beg leave to state to you what has been done in our present Conference, in order to establish a general and lasting peace and union throughout our Connexion.

When we assembled together, our hearts were most deeply touched with the awful situation of our affairs. We trembled at the thought of a division, and its dreadful consequences; and therefore determined to set apart the first day of the Conference as a day of solemn and real fasting and prayer. God was indeed in the midst of us, and we felt a confidence that a solid foundation would be laid for lasting peace and unity.

When we met in Conference the second day, we saw the necessity of appointing a committee to prepare a plan of general pacification; and, that the committee might be the men of our own choice, in the fullest sense of the words, we resolved that they should be chosen by ballot. Every preacher, therefore, in full Connexion, gave in nine papers, with a name upon each, (nine being the predetermined number of the committee.) The ballots were received, and Messrs. Mather and Pawson were desired to retire and count the votes. When they returned they gave in the following names as the first upon the list, namely, Joseph Bradford, (who was president,) John Pawson, Alexander Mather, Thos. Coke, Wm. Thompson, Samuel Bradburn, Joseph Benson, Henry Moore, and Adam Clarke. We were astonished at the choice, and clearly saw it was of God. It evidenced beyond a doubt the impartiality of the body of preachers; for there must have existed a majority, on one side or the other, in respect to the disputed points, and yet they voted for a *mixed* committee. The committee accordingly met six evenings successively, and sat each evening, after all the fatigues of the Conference, for about three hours and a half. Their plan was at last completed, and laid before the Conference, who, with the alteration of a single article, passed them unanimously. After this, two or three articles more were agreed upon, under the title of *Addenda*, in order to give the completest satisfaction, and to remove every obstacle to a lasting peace.

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT FOR GENERAL PACIFICATION.

I.—Concerning the Lord's Supper, Baptism, &c.

1.—The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except the majority of the trustees of that chapel on the one hand, and the majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people) on the other hand, allow of it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of the Conference shall be obtained before the Lord's Supper be administered.

2.—Wherever there is a society, but no chapel, if the majority of the stewards and leaders of that society testify that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's Supper should be administered to them, their desire shall be gratified; provided that the consent of the Conference be previously obtained.

3.—Provided, nevertheless, that in Mount Pleasant chapel, in Liverpool, and in all other chapels where the Lord's Supper has been already peaceably administered, the administration of it shall be continued in future.

4.—The administration of baptism, the burial of the dead, and service in church hours, shall be determined according to the regulations above-mentioned.

5.—Wherever the Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the before mentioned regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order the contrary.

6.—The Lord's Supper shall be administered by those *only* who are authorized by the Conference; and at such times, and in such manner *only*, as the Conference shall appoint.

7.—The administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the above regulations, are intended only for the members of our own society.

8.—We agree that the Lord's Supper be administered among us on Sunday evenings only; except where a majority of the stewards and leaders desire it in church hours, or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the parochial church.

9.—The Lord's Supper shall always be administered in England according to the form of the Established Church; but the person who administers shall have full liberty to give out hymns, and to use exhortation and extemporary prayer.

10.—Wherever Divine service is performed in England, on the Lord's day, in church hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the Established Church, our venerable father's Abridgment, or at least the lessons appointed by the calendar. But we recommend either the full service or the abridgment.

II.—Concerning Discipline.

1.—The appointment of preachers shall remain solely with the Conference; and no trustee, or number of trustees, shall expel or exclude from their chapel or chapels any preachers so appointed.

2.—Nevertheless, if the majority of the trustees, or the majority of the stewards and leaders of any society, believe that any preacher appointed for their circuit is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or that he has broken any of the rules above mentioned, they shall have authority to summon the preachers of the district, and all the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the circuit, to meet in their chapel on a day and hour appointed, (sufficient time being given.) The chairman of the district shall be president of the assembly; and every preacher, trustee, steward, and leader, shall have a single vote, the chairman also possessing the casting voice. And if a majority of the meeting judge that the accused preacher is immoral, erroneous in doctrines, deficient in abilities, or has broken any of the rules above-mentioned, he shall be considered as removed from that circuit; and the district committee shall, as soon as possible, appoint another preacher for that circuit, instead of the preacher so removed; and shall determine among themselves how the removed preacher shall be disposed of till the Conference, and shall have authority to suspend the said preacher from all public duties, till the Conference, if they judge proper. The district committee shall also supply, as well as possible, the place of the removed preacher, till another preacher be appointed. And the preacher thus appointed, and all other preachers, shall be subject to the above mode of trial. And if the district committee do not appoint a preacher for that circuit, instead of the removed preacher, within a month after the aforesaid removal, or do not fill up the place of the removed preacher, till another preacher be appointed, the majority of the said trustees, stewards, and leaders, being again regularly summoned, shall appoint a preacher for the said circuit, provided he be a member of the Methodist Connexion, till the ensuing Conference.

3.—If any preacher refuse to submit to the above mode of trial, in any of the cases mentioned above, he shall be considered as suspended till the Conference. And if any trustees expel from any chapel a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, the preachers appointed for that circuit shall not preach in that chapel till the ensuing Conference, or till a trial take place, according to the mode mentioned above.

4.—If any trustees expel or exclude a preacher, by their own *separate* authority, from any chapel in any circuit, the chairman of the district shall summon the members of the district committee, the trustees of that circuit who have not offended, and the stewards and leaders of the circuit. And the members of such assembly shall examine into the evidence on both sides; and if the majority of them determine that the state of the society in which the exclusion took place requires that a new chapel should be built previous to the meeting of the Conference, every proper step shall be immediately taken for erecting such chapel. And no step shall, on any account, be taken to erect a chapel for *such purpose* before the meeting of the Conference, till such meeting be summoned, and such determination be made.

5.—No preacher shall be suspended or removed from his circuit by any district-committee, except he have the privilege of the trial before mentioned.

6.—The hundred preachers mentioned in the enrolled deed, and their successors, are the only *legal* persons who constitute the Conference; and we think the junior brethren have no reason to object to this proposition, as they are regularly elected according to seniority.

7.—Inasmuch as in drawing up the preceding regulations we have laboured to restore and preserve the peace and unity of the society, and, in order thereto, have endeavoured to keep the preachers out of all disputes on the subjects therein specified,—Be it understood, that any preacher who shall disturb the peace of the society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper in our societies, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, shall be subject to the trial and penalties before mentioned.

8.—And in order that the utmost impartiality may be manifested in these regulations, for the peace of the whole Body, we also resolve, that if any local preacher, trustee, steward, or leader, shall disturb the peace of the society, by speaking for or against the introduction of the Lord's Supper, or concerning the old or new plan, so called, the superintendent of the circuit, or the majority of the trustees, stewards, and leaders of the society so disturbed, shall have authority to summon a meeting of the travelling preachers of the circuit, and the trustees, stewards, and leaders of that society. Evidence shall be examined on both sides; and if the charge be proved, the superintendent preacher shall expel from the society the person so offending.

ADDENDA.

1.—The Conference by no means wishes to divide any society by the introduction of the Lord's Supper, and therefore except that a majority of the stewards and leaders, who desire the Lord's Supper among themselves, testify in writing to the Conference, that they are persuaded no separation will be made thereby, they will not allow it.

2.—The sacrament shall not be administered to a society in any private house within two miles of any Methodist chapel in which it is regularly administered.

3.—We all agree that the pulpit shall not be a vehicle of abuse.

4.—It has been our general custom never to appoint or remove a leader or steward without first consulting the leaders and stewards of the society, and we are resolved to walk by the same rule.

5.—To prevent, as much as possible, the progress of *strife* and *debate*, and consequent divisions in our Connexion, no pamphlet or printed letter shall be circulated among us without the author's name, *and the postage or carriage paid*.

6.—Nothing contained in these rules shall be construed to violate the rights of the trustees, as expressed in their respective deeds.

Thus, beloved brethren, have we done our utmost to satisfy every party, and to unite the whole. You, by your trustees on the one hand, and your proper representatives, the leaders and stewards, on the other, are to determine concerning the introduction of the sacraments, or the service in church hours, among yourselves. We have gone abundantly farther. We have, in some degree, deposited our characters and usefulness in your hands, or the hands of your representatives, by making them judges of our morals, doctrines, and gifts. We apprehend that we could have made no farther sacrifice without sapping the foundations of Methodism, and particularly destroying the itinerant plan. O brethren! be as zealous for peace and unity in your respective societies, as your preachers have been in this blessed Conference. Let the majorities and minorities on both sides exercise the utmost forbearance towards each other; let them mutually concede one to the other as far as possible, and, by thus bearing each other's burdens, fulfil the law of Christ. Let all resentment be buried in eternal oblivion; and let contention and strife be for ever banished from the borders of our Israel.

Surely our present complete and happy union, so contrary to the fears of many, is a signal of good times. God will, we believe, pour out his Spirit upon us more largely than ever; and, by the exercise of his most gracious prerogative, bring abundance of good out of all our past evils.

To his grace and holy keeping we commend you. May nothing ever separate you and us from the love of God, or from each other, but may you be our crown of rejoicing in the great day of the Lord.

Signed, in behalf of the Conference,

Manchester, 6th Aug. 1795.

JOSEPH BRADFORD, *President*.
THOMAS COKE, *Secretary*.

Addresses from the Delegated Trustees, assembled at Manchester, to the Conference.

Resolved,—That the thanks of this meeting be *unanimously* given to the president, and the members of the Conference, for their kind attention to the business of the delegation of the trustees that has been laid before them.

Resolved,—That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Conference, signed by the president and the secretary.

Committee-room of Delegates, 4th August, 1795.

MATTHEW MAYER.
WILLIAM PINE.

TO THE METHODIST PREACHERS ASSEMBLED IN CONFERENCE.

Dear and honoured Fathers and Brethren,—We beg you to accept our sincere thanks for your kind attention in sending us propositions for general pacification and discipline.

We are sensible of the liberality and candour which are manifest in them. It is evident from their tenor, that you have attempted to meet the views of each party. We hope and trust that, by the blessing of God, it may be a means of uniting the whole body of Methodists throughout the three kingdoms.

With all deference to the Conference, we submit the following propositions to its further attention :—

That some provisions be made for the brethren who differ from the judgment of trustees, or the major part of a society, on the subjects in question, as we suppose such cases are numerous and important; we particularly refer to Leeds circuit;

That the case of those chapels where there are no leaders be more fully explained;

Also, those where the sacrament is administered every Sunday in the parochial church.

Although we think it our duty thus candidly to state the views which have occurred to us in carefully perusing the propositions, yet we think it necessary to say, we shall cheerfully acquiesce in the final determination of the Conference.

Signed, in behalf of the meeting,

MICHAEL LONGRIDGE.

Manchester, 3rd August, 1795.

[Note.—It is of importance here to observe, that the Conference did not grant even the above trifling privileges without the most arduous struggle. At its meeting a year or two previously, when a number of petitions and addresses were sent from the societies requesting an alteration in the system, a motion for destroying all the papers, without examination, was put and carried.

The short space of two years showed how unsatisfactory the Plan of Pacification was to the societies; for we find two hundred lay delegates assembled at Leeds in 1797, when the Conference was compelled to make the following concessions; the most important of which is article IV, which completely insures the stewards, leaders, and local preachers in the discharge of their duty, from the vengeance of travelling preachers either singly or collectively.]

PRINTED CIRCULAR OF THE CONFERENCE CONTAINING
THE CONCESSIONS OF 1797.

Leeds, August 7, 1797.

TO THE METHODIST SOCIETIES.

Dear Brethren,—We think it our duty to inform you, by the earliest opportunity, of the measures we have taken, in order to satisfy those of our brethren who have been made more or less uneasy by sundry publications circulated through the societies; and, we trust, that on a serious consideration of the regulations we have agreed to at this Conference, you will see that the sacrifices in respect to authority, which we have made on the part of the whole body of travelling preachers, evidence our willingness to meet our brethren in every thing which is consistent with the existence of the Methodist discipline, and our readiness to be their servants for Jesus's sake.

I.—*In respect to Finances or Money Matters.*

1.—We have determined to publish annually a very minute account of the disbursement, or application of the yearly collection: and,

2.—A full account of the affairs of Kingswood school.

3.—That all bills for the support of travelling preachers and their families, in respect to deficiencies, house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters of a temporal kind for their support, for which the circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meeting, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee.

II.—*In respect to all other Temporal Matters.*

1.—It has been determined that no circuits shall be divided till such division has been approved of by their respective quarterly meetings, and signed by the general stewards.

2.—That no other temporal matter shall be transacted by the district committees, till the approbation of the respective quarterly meetings be first given, signed by the circuit stewards.

III.—*In respect to the Receiving and Excluding Private Members of the Society.*

1.—The leaders' meeting shall have a right to declare any person on trial, improper to be received into the society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into the society.

2.—No person shall be expelled from the society for immorality, till such immorality be proved at a leaders' meeting.

IV.—*In respect to the Appointment and Removal of Leaders, Stewards, and Local Preachers, and concerning Meetings.*

1.—No person shall be appointed a leader or steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with the leaders' meeting: the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the leaders' meeting.

2.—The former rule concerning local preachers is confirmed: viz. "That no person shall receive a plan as a local preacher, without the approbation of a local preachers' meeting."

3.—In compliance with a request made by the committee of persons from various parts, namely, "That the Conference be requested to re-consider and revise those rules which relate to the calling of meetings, and appointing local preachers, made last year," we say, "No local preacher shall be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of the circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, but from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that circuit which he visits." The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of local preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money, or by living upon them; and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them. But it never was intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers, who, considered as a body, we greatly respect. And it should not be lost sight of, that several of the most respectable local preachers in the kingdom, who were in the committee which met the committee of preachers appointed by the Conference, declared their high approbation of the rule, and desired that it might be strengthened as much as possible, as none could justly complain of it.

4.—As the committee above mentioned requested also that the minutes of the last Conference concerning the calling of meetings to consider of the affairs of the Society or Connexion, be explained; and as we are exceedingly desirous of preserving the peace and union of the whole body,—we have agreed upon the following explanation; namely,—

1.—As the leaders' meeting is the proper meeting for the society, and the quarterly meeting for the circuit, we think that other formal meetings, in general, would be contrary to the Methodist economy, and very prejudicial in their consequences; but,

2.—In order to be as tender as possible, consistently with what we believe to be essential to the welfare of our societies, we allow, that other formal meetings may be held, if they first receive the approbation of the superintendent, and the leaders' or quarterly meeting; provided also, that the superintendent, if he please, be present at every such meeting.

V.—We have selected all our ancient rules, which were made before the death of our late venerable Father in the Gospel, the Rev. Mr. Wesley, which are essential rules, or prudential at this present time; and have solemnly signed them, declaring our approbation of them, and determination to comply with them; one single preacher excepted,* who, in consequence, withdrew from us.

VI.—We have determined that *all the Rules* which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings, *shall be published with the Rules of the Society, for the benefit and convenience of all the members.*

VII.—In respect to all new rules which shall be made by the Conference, It is determined, that if at any time the Conference see it necessary to make any new rule for the Societies at large, and such rule shall be objected to, at the first quarterly meeting in any circuit; and if the major part of that meeting, in conjunction with the preachers, be of opinion that the enforcing of such rule in that circuit will be injurious to the prosperity of that circuit; it shall not be enforced in opposition to the judgment of such quarterly meeting, before the second Conference. But, if the rule be confirmed by the

* Before the Conference concluded, two other preachers withdrew.

second Conference, it shall be binding to the whole Connexion. Nevertheless, the quarterly meetings, rejecting a new rule, shall not, by publications, public meetings, or otherwise, make that rule a cause of contention; but shall strive, by every means, to preserve the peace of the Connexion.

Thus, brethren, we have given up the greatest part of our executive government into your hands, as represented in your different public meetings.

1.—We have delivered the whole of our yearly collection to your management. For we know, by experience, that the bills of the quarterly meetings, if only mere justice be done to the preachers and their families, will amount to much more than the yearly collection. The Conference will, in this business, have no authority whatsoever. It will have nothing but the trouble of receiving the money, and paying the bills which shall have been sent to it from the quarterly meetings, and been approved of by the district committees. And when the accounts are published by the Conference, every quarterly meeting may compare its own accounts with those of the Conference, and thereby have as complete a check as the nature of things can possibly admit of.

The Conference has reserved to itself the management of its own book concerns. This is most reasonable: as the institution was established for the carrying on of the work of God, under the direction of Mr. Wesley and the Conference; was continued by the deed or codicil of Mr. Wesley's will, for the use of the Conference; as the whole burden of the management of the business lies upon the Conference, and the servants it employs, and on the superintendents of circuits; and also, as it is the only fund which can supply any deficiencies of the yearly collection, as the accounts published in our minutes for several years past clearly evidence, the yearly collection having not been nearly sufficient for the wants of the preachers and families, and for the carrying on of the work of God in general.

2.—The whole management of our temporal concerns may now be truly said to be invested in the quarterly meetings, the district meetings having nothing left them but a negative.

3.—Our societies have a full check on the superintendent, by the means of their leaders' meeting, in regard to the introduction of persons into society; whilst the superintendent has sufficient scope allowed him for the increase of the societies, not only according to the common course of things, but at the times of remarkable out-pourings of the Spirit of God.

4.—The members of our societies are delivered from every apprehension of clandestine expulsions; as *that* superintendent would be bold indeed, who would act with partiality or injustice in the presence of the whole meeting of leaders. Such a superintendent, we trust, we have not among us; and if such there ever should be, we should be ready to do all possible justice to our injured brethren.

5.—There is now no society officer among us who can be received without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs: nor can any officer be appointed (removed) except upon the same plan.

6.—In order to prevent any degree of precipitation in making new rules, and to obtain information of the sentiments of our people on every such rule, we have agreed to the article mentioned under the 7th head, by which no regulations will be finally confirmed till after a year's consideration, and the knowledge of the sentiments of the Connexion at large, through the medium of all their public officers.

In short, brethren, out of our great love for peace and union, and our great desire to satisfy your minds, we have given up to you by far the greatest part of the superintendent's authority: and, if we consider that the quarterly meetings are the sources from whence all temporal regulations, during the intervals of the Conference, must now originally spring: and also, that the committee, formed according to the Plan of Pacification, can, in every instance in which the trustees, leaders, and stewards choose to interfere respecting the gifts, doctrines, or moral character of preachers, supersede, in a great measure, the regular district committees; we may, taking all these things into our view, truly say, that such have been the sacrifices we have made, that our district committees themselves have hardly any authority remaining, but a bare negative in general, and the appointment of a representative to assist in drawing up the rough draught of the stations of the preachers. And besides all this, we have given the quarterly meetings opportunities of considering every new law, of suspending the execution of it for a year in their respective circuits, and of sending their sentiments on it to the Conference, before it be finally confirmed.

We have represented these measures, which we have taken for your satisfaction, in as concise a manner as we well could, giving you the sense of the whole, not only for brevity's sake, but for expedition, that you may be informed of the general heads of our proceedings as soon as possible. **IN THE REGULATIONS, WHICH WILL BE PUBLISHED WITH THE RULES OF THE SOCIETY, AS MENTIONED ABOVE, YOU WILL HAVE THE WHOLE AT LARGE.** We are, your affectionate brethren,

Signed, in behalf, and by order of the Conference,

THOMAS COKE, *President.*

SAMUEL BRADBURN, *Secretary.*

[We have printed the following Miscellaneous Regulations in order that the reader may have them to compare with the subjoined Code of Laws. These Regulations were published by the Conference of 1797, as already observed, in what is denominated the "LARGE MINUTES;" that publication being a continuation of the "Large Minutes" published by Mr. Wesley, for the government of the preachers. A copy of these Large Minutes, continued to 1797, now lies before us. Dr. Warren justly observes, "As the 'LARGE MINUTES,' published by Mr. Wesley, contain the principles by which the PREACHERS are governed; so the 'PLAN OF PACIFICATION,' agreed upon between the preachers and the people in the year 1795, and the subsequent 'REGULATIONS MADE AT LEEDS,' in the year 1797, constitute a basis of the government of the SOCIETIES." (Warren's Digest, vol. i. page 223.) It is, therefore, clear, from their not being incorporated in the Code of Laws relative to the PEOPLE, but being embodied with the Large Minutes for the government of the PREACHERS, that they relate *solely* to the discipline of the latter.]

SUNDRY MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS.

I.—*With Respect to Districts.*

1.—In order to render our districts more effective, the president of the Conference shall have power, when applied to, to supply a circuit with preachers, if any shall die, or desist from travelling; and to sanction any change of preachers which it may be necessary to make in the intervals of Conference. And to assist at any district meeting, if applied to for that purpose by the chairman of the district, or by a majority of the superintendents in such district. And he shall have a right, if written to by any who are concerned, to visit any circuit, and to inquire into their affairs with respect to METHODISM, and, in union with the district committee, to redress any grievance.

2.—The chairman of each district, in conjunction with his brethren of the committee, shall be responsible to the Conference for the execution of the laws, as far as his district is concerned.

3.—That no chairman may have cause to complain of the want of power, in cases which (according to his judgment) cannot be settled in the ordinary district meeting, he shall have authority to summon three of the nearest superintendents, to be incorporated with the district committee, who shall have equal authority to vote, and settle every thing till the Conference.

4.—The Conference recommends it to the superintendents of the circuits to invite, on all important occasions, the chairman of their respective district, to be present at their quarterly meetings.

5.—The chairman of every district shall be chosen by the ballot of the Conference, after the names of all the preachers in the district have been read to it by the secretary.

II.—*As to Delegates.*

The Conference having maturely considered the subject, is thoroughly persuaded, with many of our societies, whose letters have been read in full Conference, that it cannot admit any but regular preachers into its body, either in Conference or district meetings, and preserve the system of Methodism entire, particularly the itinerant plan, which it is determined to support. But let it be well observed, that in explaining its minutes, it was fully and explicitly understood, that, if there be any accusation against a preacher, or any difficult affair to settle, not only the circuit, or town steward, but any leader, or even member of the society, shall be admitted as evidence to the district meeting; provided the matter has been first heard at a quarterly meeting.

III.—*With Regard to Preachers.*

1.—Before any superintendent propose a preacher to the Conference, as proper to be admitted on trial, such preacher must not only be approved of at the March quarterly meeting, but must have read and signed the general Minutes, as fully approving of them. Nor must any one suppose, or pretend to think, that the conversations which have been on any of these minutes, were intended so to qualify them, as in the least to affect the spirit and design of them.

2.—No local preacher shall keep love feasts without the consent of the superintendent, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep his own place, and attend to the duties of his own station.

IV.—*Touching the Book Concerns: it is agreed,*

1.—That every superintendent shall settle his accounts with, and pay the balance to, Mr. Whitfield, at every Conference, for the preceding year.

2.—That a circular letter shall be drawn up, and sent by Mr. Whitfield to every superintendent, informing him of the above resolution.

3.—The article made last year, and published in the Minutes relative to printing, shall stand in its full force, with this exception;—should a manuscript be rejected by the book committee, a preacher may print it, provided he do not sell it at our chapels, nor adver-

tise from our pulpits. The design of this rule is to prevent any preacher in our Connexion from selling at the doors of our chapels, or otherwise, or offering to sell any books or pamphlets among our people, but those which belong to the Conference, and come from our book room. N.B. If a preacher be attacked by any of our enemies, and his character misrepresented, his printing a reply in his own defence shall not be deemed a breach of this rule.

V.—Concerning the West Indies.

1.—Let the collection be made in the course of this year, for the support of the missionaries, in every congregation where it is practicable.

2.—The district committees in the month of May are to inquire whether any preacher is willing to go to the West Indies; and the chairman of those districts, in which any preacher offers himself, are to inform Dr. Coke of it before the meeting of the Irish Conference.

VI.—The Case of Bristol.

1.—It is the opinion of the Conference, that the Plan of Pacification, in respect to the affair at Bristol, has been broken; but it is determined this shall not be a precedent, but it will take proper means that the plan shall be sacredly observed in all its parts in future.

2.—The Conference, in union with the committee of trustees in Leeds, advise the contending parties in Bristol to settle their differences in the following manner:—

1.—That our brethren who attend Divine service at the old room, Guinea-street chapel, unite with their brethren of the new chapel, and bring all their subscriptions and collections into one and the same channel with our brethren of the new chapel, according to the agreement at Manchester, and take seats in, and attend, in general, the services at the new chapel.

2.—That our brethren of the new chapel, if the others comply with the above condition, give up the service in church hours in that chapel.

[The Conference of 1797 having "selected," and "solemnly signed," all their ancient rules, these rules were afterwards published at the Book-Room, in two separate pamphlets. The first consisted entirely of extracts from the Minutes of Conference, and contained matters belonging particularly to travelling preachers, for whom it was designed as a Manual. This publication, of course, contains the Miscellaneous Regulations, but does not contain the *Rules of the Society*, nor all the regulations relating to quarterly meetings, local preachers, stewards, &c. It was not, therefore, the one referred to by the Conference, in Art. 6 of its printed Circular of the 7th of August, 1797. The second pamphlet was intended as a Manual for the local officers and people; and, as promised by the Conference, it contains, *with the Rules of the Society*, "THE WHOLE AT LARGE;" viz. "all the rules which relate to the societies, leaders, stewards, local preachers, trustees, and quarterly meetings."

RULES RELATING TO THE SOCIETY.

I.—Of receiving Members into the Society.

1.—The leaders' meeting has a right to declare any person, on trial, improper to be received into the society; and, after such declaration, the superintendent shall not admit such person into society.

2.—Neither the superintendents, nor any other preachers, shall give tickets to any until they are recommended by a leader, with whom they have met at least two months on trial.

3.—No preacher shall give notes (admitting persons on trial) to any but those who are recommended by one he knows, or until they have met three or four times in a class.

4.—He must give them the Rules of the Society the first time they meet.

5.—As some of our people have, in different parts of the kingdom, been imposed on, in various ways, by swindlers, who professed themselves members of our society, let no person be received into any society without a certificate, signed by one of the itinerant preachers in the circuit from whence he professes to have come. 1779.

II.—Of the Exclusion of Members from the Society.

1.—The far greater number of those that are separated from us, exclude themselves by neglecting to meet in class, and use the other means of grace, and so gradually forsake us. With regard to the others,

2.—Our rule is fixed, and our custom expressed in the preceding rules of society, where it is said, "If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any of them,—we will admonish him of the error of his ways; we will bear with him for a season: but then, if he repent not, he hath no more place among us."

3. No person must be expelled from the society for any breach of our rules, or even for manifest immorality, till such fact or crime has been proved at a leaders' meeting.

II.—*Of permitting Strangers to be present at the Society Meetings and Love-feasts.*

1.—Let every other meeting of the society be for the members of the society only; and let no strangers be admitted. At other times some persons may be permitted to be present; but the same persons not above three times.

2.—Let all the members of the society show their tickets; and if the stewards and leaders are not exact, others must be employed that have more resolution.

3.—Let no person attend any love-feast, without a note from the preacher.

4.—Let no love-feast be appointed but by the consent of the superintendent; nor any funeral sermon be preached; without his consent, and for those only who die happy in the Lord.

IV.—*Of Service in Church Hours.*

The cases in which it has been agreed to allow service in what are commonly called church hours, are,

1.—When the church minister, rector, vicar, or curate, is a notoriously wicked man.

2.—When he preaches Arian, Socinian, or any other equally pernicious doctrine.

3.—When there are not churches in the town or parish sufficient to contain the people.

4.—When there is no church within two or three miles.

5.—When a majority of the trustees of any chapel, on the one hand, and of the stewards and leaders of the society belonging to that chapel, on the other, allow of and request it; and as to places where there is a society, and no chapel, wherever the majority of the stewards and leaders of that society testify that it is the wish of the people, and that it will cause no division among them.

6.—Wherever Divine service is performed in England, on the Lord's-day, in church hours, the officiating preacher shall read either the service of the Church, our venerable Father's abridgment of it, or at least the lessons appointed by the calendar. But we recommend either the full service or the abridgment.

V.—*Concerning the Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in our Societies.*

1.—The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered in any chapel, except a majority of the trustees of that chapel, on the one hand, and a majority of the stewards and leaders belonging to that chapel (as the best qualified to give the sense of the people,) on the other, allow it. Nevertheless, in all cases, the consent of Conference shall be first obtained before this ordinance shall be administered.

2.—Where there is a society, but no chapel, if the majority of the stewards and leaders of that society testify, in writing, to the Conference, that it is the wish of the people that the Lord's Supper should be administered among them, and that no separation will be made thereby, their desire shall be granted.

3.—The sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered to a society in a private house, within two miles of a Methodist chapel.

4.—The Lord's Supper shall be administered by the superintendent only, or such of his helpers as are in Full Connexion, and as he shall appoint, provided, that no preacher be required to give it against his own inclination; and should it be granted to any place where the preachers on the circuit are all unwilling to give it, the superintendent shall, in that case, invite a neighbouring preacher, who is properly qualified, to give it.

5.—It shall be administered at such times and in such manner as the Conference shall appoint. And the Conference agree, that the Lord's Supper shall be administered among us on Sunday evenings only; except the majority of the stewards and leaders desire it in church hours; or where it has already been administered in those hours. Nevertheless, it shall never be administered on those Sundays on which it is administered in the parish church.

6.—The Lord's Supper shall always be administered in England according to the form of the Established Church; but the person who administers shall have liberty to give out hymns, to use exhortation, and extemporary prayer.

7.—Wherever the Lord's Supper shall be administered according to the above mentioned regulations, it shall always be continued, except the Conference order otherwise.

8.—No person shall be suffered, on any pretence, to partake of the Lord's Supper among us, unless he be a member of society, or receive a note of admission from the superintendent, (or the preacher administering,) which note must be renewed quarterly. And if any leaders, stewards, or trustees, refuse to be regulated by this rule, the sacrament shall not be administered where this is the case.

9.—The administration of baptism and the burial of the dead, shall be determined according to the regulations above mentioned, respecting the Lord's Supper.

VI.—*On Conformity to the World, and Sabbath-breaking.*

1.—Those schoolmasters and schoolmistresses who receive dancing-masters into their schools, and those parents who employ dancing-masters for their children, shall be no longer members of our society.

2.—To prevent or remedy the evils of dram-drinking, evil-speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, expensiveness or gaiety of apparel, and contracting debts without due care to discharge them, or smuggling, buying or selling uncustomed goods, the preachers shall solemnly and frequently warn the societies against these evils, and inform them, that they who are guilty of them, cannot be permitted to remain with us.

3.—We strongly recommend to all the members of our societies, the religious observation of the Lord's-day, and desire our superintendents to exclude from the society all who buy or sell on that sacred day, except in case of medicine for the sick, or for supplying necessities for funerals.

4.—No member of our society must employ any barber on the Lord's-day. And all our people, who possibly can, are desired to employ only those barbers who conscientiously abstain from Sabbath-breaking.

5.—No member of our society must make any wake or feast, or go to any on the Lord's-day, but bear a public testimony against them.

VII.—*Of Marrying with Unbelievers.*

Some of our members have married with unbelievers, yea, with unawakened persons. This has had fatal effects. They have had either a cross for life, or turned back unto perdition. To put a stop to this, every preacher is enjoined to enforce frequently the Apostle's caution, "Be not unequally yoked." And he is openly to declare, that whoever does this shall be expelled the society. When any such are expelled, he is to subjoin a suitable exhortation, and to urge all single persons to take no step in so weighty a matter, without advising with the most serious of their Christian friends.

VIII.—*Of Bankruptcies.*

To prevent scandal, when any of our members become bankrupts, the superintendent shall talk with them at large. And if any of them have not kept fair accounts, or have been concerned in the base practice of raising money by coining notes, commonly called the bill trade, he shall be expelled immediately.

IX.—*Of Loyalty and Subjection to the King and Government.*

None of us shall, either in writing or conversation, speak lightly or irreverently of the government under which he lives. We are to observe, that the Oracles of God command us to be subject to the higher powers; and that "honour to the king" is there connected with the "fear of God." 1792.

X.—*Of Days of Fasting.*

A general Fast shall be held in all our societies the first Friday after New Year's day; after Lady-day; after Midsummer-day; and after Michaelmas-day,

RULES RELATING TO THE OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETIES

I.—*Of the Appointment or Change of Stewards and Leaders.*

1.—No person shall be appointed a leader or society steward, or be removed from his office, but in conjunction with a leaders' meeting; the nomination to be in the superintendent, and the approbation or disapprobation in the leaders' meeting.

2.—As several inconveniences have arisen respecting the change of stewards; to remedy this, let it be observed, that the office of a steward ceases at the end of the year; and every superintendent is required to change one steward at least; so that no steward may be in office above two years together, except in some extraordinary cases.

3.—The proper time for changing the circuit-stewards, is at the quarterly meeting, when the superintendent shall consult all who are present, respecting the most proper person or persons to act in that capacity.

4.—The place for appointing or changing the steward of any particular society, is the leaders' meeting of that society. For, in the general, "No person can be received as a society-officer among us without the consent of that meeting to which he particularly belongs; nor can any officer be appointed," except on the same plan."—Minutes of 1797.

II.—Of the Local Preachers, and their Meetings.

1.—The superintendent shall regularly meet the local preachers once a quarter; and no person shall receive a plan as a local preacher, nor be suffered to preach among us as such, without the approbation of that meeting. Or, if in any circuit a regular local preachers' meeting cannot be held, they shall be proposed and approved at the general quarterly meeting of the circuit. 1794.

2.—All local preachers shall meet in class. No exception shall be made in respect to any who have been travelling preachers in former years. 1793.

3.—Let no local preacher, who will not meet in class, or who is not regularly planned by the superintendent of the circuit where he resides, be permitted to preach.

4.—Let no local preacher be permitted to preach in any other circuit than his own, without producing a recommendation from the superintendent of that circuit in which he lives; nor suffer any invitation to be admitted as a plea, except from men in office, who act in conjunction with the superintendent of that circuit which he visits.—N.B. The design of this rule is to prevent any, under the character of local preachers, from burdening the people, either by collecting money or living upon them, and to prevent improper persons, who bear no part of the expense, from inviting local preachers thus to visit them. But it was never intended to reflect the least disrespect on any of our worthy brethren, the local preachers whom, as a body, we greatly respect.

5.—Let no local preacher keep love-feasts, without the consent of the superintendent, nor in any wise interfere with his business. Let every one keep in his own place, and attend to the duties of his station.

6.—No preacher, who has been suspended or expelled, shall, on any account, be employed as a local preacher, without the authority of Conference.

III.—Concerning Trustees.

1.—The trustees, in conjunction with the superintendent, who shall have one vote only, shall choose their own stewards; who shall receive and disburse all seat-rents, and such collections as shall be made for the purpose of paying interest of money due upon the premises, or for reducing the principal. The aforesaid steward shall keep proper accounts in books provided for that purpose; which books shall be open for the inspection of the superintendent, and audited in his presence once every year; or oftener, if convenient.

2.—No trustee, however accused, or defective in conformity to the established rules of the society, shall be removed from the society, unless his crime or breach of the rules of the society be proved in the presence of the trustees and leaders. 1794.

IV.—Of the Quarterly Meetings, composed of the Stewards of the different Societies in each Circuit.

1.—All bills for the support of travelling preachers and their families; for house-rent, fire, candles, sickness, travelling expenses, and all other matters, for which the circuits cannot provide, shall first meet with the approbation of the quarterly meetings, and be signed by the general steward of the circuit, before they can be brought to the district committee.

2.—No circuits shall be divided, until such division has been approved by the respective quarterly meetings, and signed by the general steward.

3.—Before any superintendent propose a preacher to the Conference as proper to be admitted on trial, such preacher must be approved of at the March quarterly meeting. 1797.

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